

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A locking toggle clasp assembly for releasably coupling opposing terminal portions of a jewelry item, comprising:

a toggle bar connected to a first terminal portion of the jewelry item; and

a toggle clasp connected to a second terminal portion of the jewelry item, the toggle clasp having a loop, with proximal and distal portions, defining an opening, the distal portion of the loop being farthest from the second terminal portion of the jewelry item, and a swivel, with proximal and distal portions, the distal portion of the swivel being farthest from the second terminal portion of the jewelry item;

~~wherein~~ the swivel is selectively movable between an open position in which the swivel is substantially outside of the opening, and a locked position,

in ~~which~~ the locked position the distal end of the swivel is substantially inside the opening, and a gap exists in the portion of the opening not filled by the swivel, and wherein a portion of the jewelry item attached to the toggle passes through the opening gap and between the distal portion of the swivel and the distal portion of the loop.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Canceled)

4. (Currently Amended) The locking toggle clasp assembly according to claim 3 ~~1~~, wherein the toggle bar has a major axis and a minor axis, the toggle bar being larger than the opening in a first dimension along the major axis and smaller than the

opening in a second dimension along the minor axis when the toggle clasp is in the open position.

5. (Original) The locking toggle clasp assembly according to claim 4, wherein the toggle bar is adapted to be inserted through the opening along the minor axis when the toggle clasp is in the open position.

6. (Original) The locking toggle clasp assembly according to claim 5, wherein the major axis of the toggle bar is in a plane generally perpendicular to a major axis of the jewelry item.

7. (Currently Amended) The locking toggle clasp assembly according to claim 3 1, wherein the toggle loop and the swivel cooperatively define a first open area when the swivel is in the open position and a second open area when the swivel is in the locked position, the second open area being smaller than the first open area.

8. (Currently Amended) The locking toggle clasp assembly according to claim 3 1, wherein the swivel is releasably maintained in the locked position due to frictional engagement between the swivel and the toggle-loop.

9. (Currently Amended) The locking toggle clasp assembly according to claim 3 1, further comprising means for connecting the toggle bar to the first terminal portion of the jewelry item.

10. (Currently Amended) The locking toggle clasp assembly according to claim 3 1, further comprising means for connecting the toggle clasp to the second terminal portion of the jewelry item.

11. (Original) The locking toggle clasp assembly according to claim 1, wherein the jewelry item is a chain.

12. (Original) The locking toggle clasp assembly according to claim 1, wherein the jewelry item is a bracelet.

13. (Original) The locking toggle clasp assembly according to claim 12, wherein the bracelet comprises a plurality of links.

14. (Original): The locking toggle clasp assembly according to claim 1, wherein the jewelry item is a necklace.

15. (Original) The locking toggle clasp assembly according to claim 14, wherein the necklace comprises a plurality of links.

16. (Currently Amended) A toggle clasp assembly for releasably coupling opposing ends of an item of jewelry, comprising:

a male toggle member having a major dimension along a first axis and a minor dimension along a second axis, the male toggle member adapted to be coupled to a first end of the jewelry item such that the first axis is generally perpendicular to a major axis of the jewelry item;

a female toggle member defining an opening and adapted to be coupled to an opposing end of the jewelry item, the female toggle member having a portion distal to the opposing end of the jewelry item; and

a protruding member pivotally connected to the female toggle member and having an end distal to the opposing end of the jewelry item, the protruding member being selectively movable between an open position in which the protruding member is

substantially outside the opening allowing the male toggle member to pass through the opening, and a closed position in which the distal end of the protruding member is ~~substantially~~ inside the opening to reduce the size of the opening to prevent the male toggle member from passing through the opening and a portion of the first end of the jewelry item passes through the opening between the distal end of the protruding member and the distal portion of the female toggle member.

17. (Original) The toggle clasp assembly according to claim 16, wherein the major dimension of the male toggle member is larger than the opening.

18. (Original) The toggle clasp assembly according to claim 17, wherein the male toggle member can pass through the opening along the second axis corresponding to the minor dimension when the protruding member is in the open position.

19. (Previously Presented) The toggle clasp assembly according to claim 17, wherein the protruding member is releasably maintained in the closed position due to frictional engagement between the protruding member and the female toggle member when the protruding member is in the closed position.

20. (Currently Amended) A method for releasably coupling opposed ends of an item of jewelry, comprising:

providing a male toggle member on a first end of the item of jewelry, the male member having a major dimension and a minor dimension;

providing a female toggle member on an opposing end of the item of jewelry, the female toggle member defining an opening that is smaller than the major dimension,

the female toggle member having a portion distal to the opposing end of the item of jewelry;

pivoting a swivel about the female toggle member to an open position in which the swivel is substantially outside the opening;

inserting the male toggle member through the opening along an axis corresponding to the minor dimension when the swivel is in the open position;

pivoting the swivel to a closed position in which ~~the~~ an end of the swivel distal to the opposing end of the item of jewelry is ~~substantially~~ within the opening and a portion of the item of jewelry extends through the opening between the distal end of the swivel and the distal portion of the female toggle member, wherein the swivel reduces the opening to a second size to prevent the male toggle member from passing through the opening.

21. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 20, further comprising releasably locking the swivel in the closed position by frictional engagement between the swivel and the female toggle member.

22. (Canceled).